American Board of Commissioners for
Foreign Missions.

Pacific Is

MICRONESIAN MISSION.

A CONDENSED SKETCH.

1852 — 1887.

BOSTON:
Printed by Stanley & Usher.
1887.

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The Micronesian Mission.

Location. — Micronesia, meaning "Little Islands," embraces four principal groups with about one thousand islands, lying mostly just north of the equator, between longitude 106° and 145° west from Washington; five thousand miles southwest from San Francisco; from Honolulu, twenty-five hundred miles. The groups, beginning with the most eastern and southern, are the Gilbert, Marshall, Caroline, and Ladrone Islands. Missions of the American Board are scattered over an area measuring twenty-five hundred miles from east to west, and some twelve hundred miles from north to south, confined to the three groups first named. The Ladrone Islands are under Spanish rule, and the native population is nearly extinct. The Mortlock Islands, a small group within the Caroline, with Ruk and several other islands, constitute the foreign missionary field of the Ponape Christians. The Hawaiian Evangelical Association has co-operated with the Board in work in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands.

Character of the Islands. — Except a few in the Caroline group, all are of coral formation. They consist of a belt of coral reef rising to low-water mark and enclosing a lagoon, into which usually one or more passages lead from the open sea. Upon this reef are islets formed of coral, sand, and rocks, washed up by the waves, rising from four to ten feet above high-water mark, the tide flowing about three feet. These islets are covered thickly with trees, and can be seen ten or fifteen miles at sea. The lagoons which have channels are good harbors, but are often inaccessible to sailing vessels during the trade winds.

Kusaie and Ponape, of the Caroline group, are of basaltic formation, and have mountains from two to three thousand feet high. Ruk, Pelew, and Yap are also high islands.

Climate and Products. — Perpetual summer reigns. The thermometer ranges from 72° to 90° Fahrenheit; at Ponape, from 74° to 87°; at Apaiang, from 80° to 90°. Coral islands are not ordinarily fertile. Three principal products support human life: (1) The cocoanut-palm, growing wild on all the islands. It has branches only at the top, and is often eighty feet high. (2) The bread-fruit tree, a beautiful tree growing on all the groups except the Gilbert.

Its general appearance is not unlike the oak. A foreigner, who has this fruit properly cooked, finds it nutritious and a good substitute for potatoes. (3) The pandanus-tree, or screw-pine, bearing a large bunch of juicy fruit. Besides these fruit-trees, taro, an edible root, is grown. On the high islands, especially Kusaie and Ponape, there is a much larger range of products, including more than a dozen kinds of bananas. Various tropical fruits are now introduced.

Fish are taken in abundance. There were no animals on the coral islands, but many sea-birds. Pigs and chickens have been introduced. The hills of Kusaie and Ponape are covered with forest trees, where plenty of wild pigs and pigeons are found.

Population. — The inhabitants are of the brown Polynesian race, having straight hair. As no census has ever been taken, estimates of the population vary greatly. The Gilbert Islanders were said, a few years ago, to number about thirty thousand: there are now thought to be not far from twenty thousand. The Marshall Islanders have been estimated at fourteen thousand. Ponape has a population of about five thousand; the Mortlocks and Ruk about fourteen thousand; Mokil and Pingelap about twelve hundred and fifty; Yap about eight or ten thousand.

GOVERNMENT. — Many of the islands have chiefs, whose authority is hereditary. On Ponape there are several tribes, each having an independent king or chieftain. Generally the rank is derived from the mother. Many of the Gilbert Islands are ruled by an assembly of "old men."

HOMES AND HABITS OF THE PEOPLE. — In the Gilbert and Marshall Islands the houses have no sides for about four feet from the ground, with a closed attic and a thatched roof. In the Caroline Islands the houses have sides covered with light wood or reeds. The people sleep in these attics, or, in dry weather, on the ground, with a wooden pillow and a mat covering. Before the gospel came to them, the men in the Gilbert Islands went nearly or quite naked; the women wearing a little fringed skirt. In the Marshall Islands the women wore two mats belted at their waists, and the men had a fringed skirt. The Caroline Islanders, as a general thing, were not so well clad as the Marshall Islanders. Both men and women were elaborately tattooed; but this heathenish custom is rapidly passing away. There was no marriage rite known; but the pairing of men and women was respected. They seemed to care for their chil-

dren, but had less regard for old people. The men spent their time in fishing, in canoe-building, and in getting food for their chiefs. The women were employed in twisting cord, to take the place of nails and pegs, and in making mats and sails for proas. The people are greatly addicted to war, and their feuds have resulted in a great decrease of the population of many of the islands. Each of the main groups has its own language, while in the Caroline group there are six or eight distinct languages.

Religious Ideas. — Spirits of ancestors and other spirits were worshiped, but no idols. The people were very superstitious, but had no conception of a Supreme God, and no idea of sacrifice. Certain places, regarded as the resorts of spirits, were not crossed. Some islands had priests, who, in times of sickness, and on special occasions, practised their incantations, pretending to converse with the dead.

The Mission of the American Board. — In 1852, three missionaries, Messrs. Snow, Gulick, and Sturges, with their wives, and two Hawaiian teachers, settled on Kusaie and Ponape, receiving a welcome from the unclad and wild people. In 1855, Mr. and Mrs. Doane

sailed from Honolulu for Ponape, followed the same year by Dr. and Mrs. Pierson, who remained at Kusaie with Mr. Snow. On their way they explored many of the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, and advised that they be occupied. The next year, the first *Morning Star* sailed from Boston, carrying Mr. and Mrs. Bingham, who, in November, 1857, reached Apaiang, of the Gilbert group, and on the same voyage of the *Star* Messrs. Pierson and Doane, with their wives, were stationed at Ebon, one of the Marshall Islands. Thus, in 1857, the three groups were opened for Christian work.

The Marshall Islanders were known as treacherous, and many warnings were given the missionaries against landing among them; but the way was wonderfully prepared for their coming. The languages of the several groups were studied and reduced to writing, and after six years two persons were received to the church at Kusaie. In nine years there were thirty converts on that island, and Mr. Snow was then transferred to Ebon. On Ponape it was eight years before the first natives were received to the church; but by 1867 there were one hundred and sixty-three members, and one thousand persons who could read. In 1860, Dr. and Mrs. Pierson were compelled, by ill-health, to with-

draw from the mission; and, for a similar reason, two years later, Dr. and Mrs. Gulick withdrew. In 1865, Mr. Bingham, too, was forced to return to the United States, leaving the work on Apaiang in charge of the Hawaiian teacher. In November of 1866 he sailed from Boston in command of the new *Morning Star*, built by the contributions of the children. In 1868, fifteen years from the beginning, there were five hundred and forty-five church members in all the mission, one hundred and forty-four having been added during the previous year. In 1871, Mr. and Mrs. Whitney joined the mission, followed, in 1874, by Messrs. Logan, Taylor, and Rand, with their wives, — Mrs. Taylor dying only a few weeks after arriving at Apaiang. The statistics of 1873 report nine hundred and twenty-eight members, with one hundred and eighty-nine additions. In 1875, there were, on various islands, about twenty churches, with an aggregate membership of not far from twelve hundred. The New Testament, or a portion of it, had been translated into four dialects, and two and a half million pages had been printed.

Year by year new islands were visited and supplied with teachers. Pingelap and Mokil were entered in 1871; the Mortlocks, in 1874; Ruk, in 1879. The Mortlocks, included among

the Caroline Islands, were chosen as the foreign missionary field of the Ponape Christians, and they have supplied the necessary teachers. In 1875 Mr. Bingham's health was so seriously impaired that he removed, with his wife, to Honolulu, where they have since devoted their strength to labors in behalf of the Gilbert Islanders, in preparing books, etc. In 1877 Dr. and Mrs. Pease joined the mission, while Mr. Taylor and Mr. and Mrs. Snow returned to the United States. The Report of 1878 gives fourteen hundred and ninety-eight church members, with three hundred and fifty-eight additions. In that year the *Star* visited twenty-six different islands. In 1880 Mr. Taylor rejoined the mission at the Gilbert Islands, but, on account of the death of his wife, a sister of the first Mrs. Taylor, has been compelled again to withdraw. In the same year, Mr. and Mrs. Walkup joined the mission, followed, in 1881, by Miss Cathcart, and, in 1882, by Miss Fletcher. Two years later Miss Palmer went out for Ponape, and in 1886 Misses Crosby, Hemingway, and Smith reached Kusaie, to be connected with the schools for the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. Mr. and Mrs. Logan took up their residence on Ruk in 1884, thus opening a new station from which not only the whole Ruk archipelago could be worked,

but securing a near point for the supervision of the churches on the Mortlock group.

No American missionaries are now residing in either the Gilbert or Marshall groups. The training-schools for both these groups are on Kusaie, where foreigners can dwell with much less peril to health. The foreign laborers among the Gilbert Islanders are all Hawaiians, and the work there is conducted by the Hawaiian Evangelical Association, in coöperation with the American Board. No other missionary organization is engaged in Micronesia except the London Missionary Society, which employs a few helpers in the southernmost islands of the Gilbert group, in connection with its Samoan Mission.

By reports received in 1886, there were, in our Micronesian Mission, fifty-one churches, with forty-nine hundred and eighty-five members; sixteen native pastors; and a total of forty-four native laborers, including Hawaiians. More than thirty different islands are now occupied. The savage people have been tamed. On many islands no heathenism is found; on others it is fast disappearing. The New Testament and Christian books are in the hands of the people. The native Christians, under the guidance of the missionaries, are already and are to be yet more and more, the great evangelizing agency.

THE MORNING STAR. — Four vessels of this name have done service for the American Board in Micronesia: (1) A brigantine, launched November 12, 1856, at a cost of $18,351. She was sold, after ten years' service, for $5,812. (2) The second *Star* was launched September 22, 1866, costing $23,406. She was wrecked upon the island of Kusaie during a calm, October 18, 1869. (3) The third *Star* was a brig of one hundred and eighty-one tons, ninety-eight feet long. She cost $28,462, of which sum $19,087 were received from insurance of the previous vessel. She was wrecked off the harbor of Kusaie, February 22, 1883. (4) The fourth *Star* is a barkentine of about 430 tons burden, with auxiliary steam-power to be used in calms and currents. She cost, with her machinery and outfit $44,280.62, and was launched at Bath, Maine, August 6, 1884. The amount raised, chiefly by the children, for the first vessel was $28,505; for the second, $28,792; for the third, $9,021; for the fourth, $48,275.33; total for the four vessels, $114,593.33. This sum has not only built the four vessels, but has been available, to some extent, for repairs and running expenses.